

ARTICLE II, SECTION 25
OF
ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MINNESOTA
ORDINANCE #27



COTTON TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COTTON TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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PREPARED BY THE

COTTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING TASK FORCE

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM

KLAERS, POWERS AND ASSOCIATES
DULUTH, MINNESOTA

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COTTON TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GOALS AND POLICIES

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies are intended to help guide decision makers and developers, service providers and initiators of other actions that will shape and impact future Cotton Township. The consistency of future development with these goals and policies must be evaluated in light of the statements of desired future conditions, the Comprehensive Plan map, and the illustration presenting access and road construction concepts in the Trunk Highway 53 Corridor area.

A. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 1A. Preserve the rural character of Cotton Township through large lot development that maintains present dwelling unit densities in the non-shoreland, rural areas of the Town.

Policy 1a: Control development in Floodways and Floodplains consistent with State of Minnesota regulations.

Policy 1b: Preserve township wetlands consistent with county, state and federal regulations.

Policy 1c: Preserve critical habitat in rural areas through zoning and subdivision controls.

Policy 1c: Control development in areas that have unsuitable soil characteristics, high water tables or other factors that would affect the quality of rural development.

GOAL 2A. Protect the quality of Cotton Township surface and ground water resources by managing development in watersheds and decreasing population densities allowed in the watershed away from the immediate shoreland.

Policy 2a: Support zoning controls that will prevent overdevelopment in shoreland areas and preserve water quality.

Policy2b: Provide high density lakeshore areas with opportunities to reduce water quality degradation caused by inadequate, individual on-site sewage treatment systems.

Policy2c: Carefully review shoreland development standards and variances for development in the shoreland zones.

B. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 1B: DEVELOP THE COTTON TRUNK HIGHWAY 53 AND ST. LOUIS COUNTY HIGHWAY 52 INTERSECTION AREA AS THE COMMERCIAL CENTER FOR THE COMMUNITY.

GOAL 2B: LOCATE COMPATIBLE AND COMPLIMENTARY COMMERCIAL USES IN THE COTTON TRUNK HIGHWAY 53 AND ST. LOUIS COUNTY HIGHWAY 52 INTERSECTION AREA.

Policy 1b: The primary Cotton Commercial Area is defined as the land on the east side of Trunk Highway 53 three quarters of a mile north and one mile south of the intersection of St. Louis County Highway 52 and TH 53, and the land on the west side of TH 53 one half mile north and three quarters of a mile south of the aforementioned intersection. Commercial property on the westside (southbound lane) of TH 53 also includes a 27.69 acre parcel south of the Grey Road /TH 53 intersection.

Policy 2b: Commercial development will be confined to the buildable land on the east and west sides of TH 53 in this area and the commercially zoned land may extend one quarter mile or more east and west of the TH 53.

Policy 3b: Commercial uses in Cotton Township, along TH 53 shall be limited to highway service commercial and neighborhood or community commercial uses that serve residents and highway travelers.

Policy 4b: Commercial uses that cannot be supported by on-site sewage and water supply systems should not be allowed to develop in the primary Cotton commercial area, until such time as a community wastewater treatment system is available.

Policy 5b: Commercial development policies regarding highway access, compatible uses, and wastewater treatment also apply to the commercial area identified locally as the Triple T Truck Stop. (North One-half of Southwest One Quarter of Southwest One Quarter, Section 23, Township 54, Range 17W.)

Policy 6b: Commercial uses suitable for this commercial zone do not include land uses that meet the definition of “ Adult Uses” as defined by St. Louis County ordinances or State of Minnesota law regulating such uses.

Policy 7b. Commercial uses in the Cotton Commercial district (defined in Policy 1b.) shall be reviewed by the Cotton Township Planning Committee prior to approval of zoning or building permits by St. Louis County.

C. LIGHT INDUSTRIAL USES

GOAL C1: ALLOW LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THOSE AREAS SUITABLE FOR LIGHT INDUSTRIAL USES, IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO SAFE HIGHWAY ACCESS.

GOAL C2: LIMIT THE AREA AVAILABLE FOR NEW INDUSTRIAL USES FIRST TO LANDS THAT WILL NOT CREATE CONFLICTS WITH EXISTING RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USES.

Policy 1c: Only light industrial uses that can be supported by on-site sewage and water supply systems should be allowed in Cotton Township.

Policy 2c : Certain light industrial uses may be allowed on large parcels in the rural areas of the Town consistent with County zoning and the comprehensive plan.

Policy 3c: Light industrial uses shall screen all outside storage of materials, supplies and wastes from adjacent properties and public roads.

Policy 4c: Light industrial uses that emit, noise, dust, odors, glare, vibration, x-rays or other similar affects shall not be allowed in close proximity to non-compatible residential and commercial uses.

Policy 5c: Light industrial uses that manufacture or generate large quantities of hazardous materials shall not be allowed.

D. RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL D1: PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS, VISITORS AND ALL AGE GROUPS.

GOAL D2: PROVIDE SAFE AND EFFICIENT CONNECTIONS TO STATE AND COUNTY TRAILS.

GOAL D3: DEVELOP THE TOWN COMMUNITY CENTER RECREATION AREA AS THE PRIMARY COMMUNITY RECREATION FACILITY.

Policy 1d: Cooperate with user groups to provide facilities for recreation programs serving seniors, adults and children and offered by service organizations and recreation associations.

Policy 2d: Encourage cooperative project funding that forms public and private partnerships to provide, enhance or rehabilitate town recreational facilities.

Policy 3d: Only a moderate range of recreational facilities will be owned and maintained by the Town of Cotton.

Policy 4d: Examine alternate methods for funding recreation facilities and programs including cost sharing with user groups and recreation associations, and fees for use by non-residents.

E. TRANSPORTATION

GOAL E1: MINIMIZE EXPANSION OF THE TOWNSHIP MAINTAINED ROAD SYSTEM AND UPGRADE EXISTING TOWN ROADS TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT LOCAL TRAFFIC CIRCULATION SYSTEM.

Policy 1e: Cotton Township does not have road construction standards, therefore all new development will be required to construct necessary roads to applicable County standards for rural roads and all new town roads must be duly accepted by the Town for future maintenance responsibility.

Policy 2e: Improvements to existing Town Roads should be prioritized and programmed over time consistent with available resources and citizen support.

Policy 3e: Priorities for improvements to Town Roads will be determined by the Town Board based on public safety needs, traffic volume, road conditions and other criteria adopted by the Board.

F. COMMUNITY FACILITIES - EDUCATION

GOAL F1: MAINTAIN LOCAL ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS.

Policy1f: Work with the Cotton School Board on long range plans for educational facilities in Cotton.

Policy2f: Preserve adequate land area within the community for expansion of existing schools or construction of new schools.

G. COMMUNITY FACILITIES - PUBLIC FACILITIES

GOAL G1: PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH A MODERN COMMUNITY CENTER IN THE TRUNK HIGHWAY 53 AND ST. LOUIS COUNTY HIGHWAY 52 INTERSECTION AREA.

Policy 1g: Examine the costs and benefits of opportunities for shared space and/or combined public facilities with private sector interests.

Policy2g: Develop the Town Highway 53 property as the governmental center for Cotton Township.

F. RESOURCE EXTRACTION

GOAL F1: RESOURCE EXTRACTION ACTIVITIES CONFORM TO ALL LOCAL, COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS.

GOAL F2: MINIMIZE THE IMPACT TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT FROM FORESTRY AND MINING ACTIVITIES.

GOAL F3: MINIMIZE THE IMPACTS FROM RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS ON EXISTING NON-COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT.

Policy1f: Support existing regulations governing gravel mining in Cotton Township.

Policy2f: Prohibit expansion of existing gravel mining operations that are not in compliance with the County standards.

Policy3f: Limit the number of permits for gravel mining in Cotton by section, when necessary to preserve and protect non-compatible development.

COTTON TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COTTON TOWNSHIP: A SENSE OF PLACE

Cotton Township has a history rich with the accomplishments and hardships of early settlers. Cotton Townships first residents were mostly immigrants moving from the Duluth area to build farms and settlements in the outlying regions. These first residents of Cotton, cleared land for housing, raising crops and livestock. They battled extreme weather and toiled long hours to create a foothold in the wilderness for their families and enterprises. They reached out to new neighbors and were generous with their time and money to needy families.

Today residents are as hardy and industrious as the first settlers. The areas climate remains subject to rapid changes and strong storms. Cotton residents enjoy the challenges of their climate, the relaxed pace of country living and the natural amenities available in their backyard.

New development is welcomed and there are opportunities for economic growth throughout the area. The community pulls together for projects that benefit youth and education, providing additional amenities that draw people to the area. Cotton is not projected to grow at accelerated rates and most year-round residents are comfortable with that.

The intersection of State Trunk Highway 53(STH 53) and St. Louis County Highway 52 (SLCH 52) is the center of commerce, education, government and recreation for Cotton and surrounding communities. The population and vehicle traffic increases during the warm summer months as seasonal property owners and their families return from winter residences. Summer vacation travelers increase traffic on STH 53 presenting opportunities for businesses serving the needs of highway travelers.

Cotton's Comprehensive Plan is about protecting and preserving the qualities of the community that make it a special place and enhancing these attributes for future generations. The plan is not just a land use plan but a plan that ties the land and the residents together.

COTTON TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Cotton Township's comprehensive plan* is a response to a variety of development and land use issues facing the community in the late 1990s:

- ? Conversion of seasonal cabins to year-round homes and construction of new year-round homes on vacant lake shore or river front property;
- ? New residential development in rural areas impinging on forest habitat and agricultural uses;
- ? Physical limitations placed on development by soils, wetlands and drainage features;
- ? The desire to keep unincorporated Cotton, the place along State Trunk Highway 53 as a viable highway commercial district and social center for the community.

* Cotton was included in a St. Louis County Plan for the Southwest portion of the County. This is the first plan prepared by Cotton Township for the community.

B. HOW WILL THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BE USED?

Cotton Township has no zoning authority and local zoning administration is the responsibility of St. Louis County Planning Department. The township wanted a master plan to help guide land use and development decisions at the County level by providing a more formalized process for local input, and a clear statement of the desired future community.

The Cotton Comprehensive Plan is intended to assist St. Louis County Planning Department in the review and permitting of future development; and to guide lake associations and other property owners in preserving water quality and the natural features of the town. The plan is also intended to assist elected officials in programming and financing desired or necessary future public improvement projects.

Zoning administration in Cotton Township is the responsibility of the St. Louis County Planning Department. A major impetus to development of a comprehensive plan was the desire to communicate a clear vision of the future community that would result in consistent zoning administration with ample opportunity for local input at the County level.

C. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Recent residential development is primarily based on the water resources in the community and continues a statewide and St. Louis County trend of converting seasonal lakeshore cabins to year-round homes, or constructing new year-round homes on lakeshore lots for early retired and commuting workers. High traffic on State Trunk Highway 53, particularly in the summer months, has spurred new commercial development along the highway.

However, glacial till soils, high groundwater table, wetlands and natural drainage systems present obstacles to development, especially in the shoreland zones of the Town's rivers, lakes and streams.

Rural residential development is also a concern for Cotton Township. There are large areas of forested upland and wetland that present opportunities for rural residential uses that may also include agricultural pursuits and/or light industrial uses. This section examines the natural features of the community and the relationship of these natural features and systems to existing and new land uses in Cotton Township.

D. LAKESHORE AND RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

1. SHORELAND DEVELOPMENT

Cotton Township encompasses a 72 square mile area that extends east to west across the middle of southern St. Louis County, Minnesota. The natural environment of Cotton Township is dominated by forested uplands, swamps, and bogs. The Whiteface River is the major water resource in the community flowing from east to west across the double township. State Trunk Highway 53 provides easy access to Duluth and Virginia and makes the lakeshore areas of Cotton attractive to commuters and early retirees.

Within a 25 mile radius of Cotton there are other significant lakeshore areas that combine to provide a population over 5,000 people during the summer months.

Residential growth in Cotton has been primarily located in the shoreland areas. Conversion of seasonal cabins to year-round homes is a trend that is prevalent throughout St. Louis County and Minnesota. High density development along the lakeshore can result in water quality problems due to inadequate treatment of wastewater and an over abundance of nutrients in lake watersheds contributing to accelerated lake eutrophication.

2. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The combination of high value lake shore areas, wooded rural lots and quick access to jobs in both the Duluth and Virginia areas, has fostered residential development in Cotton Township during the period 1988 through 1999.

Cotton had a total of 429 year-round residents and 164 households in 1990. By 1998, the population had increased to 446 people in 175 households. These figures do not include

seasonal property owners. Population growth is expected to continue at one or two residences per year primarily in the shoreland zones.

Overall the population of Minnesota and St Louis County is aging as “baby boomers” begin reaching their 50s. There is no senior housing in the community aside from individual assisted living operations in existing residences.

3. EXISTING LAND USE

Pro-West and Associates of Walker, Minnesota prepared a land use analysis based on the most recent information from LANDSAT Satellite Imagery. Pro-West prepared a map and summary table of land use in Cotton Township. Table 1 presents statistical land use information.

TABLE I COTTON TOWNSHIP LAND USE BY ACREAGE

LAND USE CATEGORY	NUMBER OF ACRES IN CATEGORY
1. FORESTED	19,652
2. HAY, PASTURE, GRASSLAND	2,283
3. BRUSH LAND	8,885
4. CULTIVATED LAND	440
5. WATER	1,629
6. BOG, MARSH, FEN	12,501
7. URBAN/RURAL DEVELOPMENT	303
8. MINING	22
9. ROAD, IMPROVED TRAILS, RAIL R.	920

MAP EXISTING LAND USE

E. RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. RURAL NON-LAKESHORE DEVELOPMENT

In the rural, non-lakeshore areas of the community residential development on 9 and 17 acre lots has also increased. Residents may have livestock and are allowed to operate home based businesses. Some rural home based businesses have created conflicts with adjacent residential properties in the form of transient customer and product delivery traffic to the property, adverse visual impacts of open storage of equipment, parts, and products.

2. REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER COTTON DUMP.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is currently examining the feasibility of restoring the former Cotton dump site, along the Whiteface River, by removing the old debris and utilizing the material to reshape the former St. Louis County Sanitary Landfill in southwest Cotton. The former landfill has suffered from differential settlement, thereby increasing opportunities for increased leachate production and impacts on the local groundwater system.

If testing and engineering studies prove favorable the MPCA would fund a project to remove up to 30,000 cubic yards of material from the dump site to the former landfill property.

Depending on the ultimate grades of the dump site, the property could be redeveloped for a number of uses including residential. If the end product proves beneficial Cotton would first look to develop the remainder of the property for senior housing and secondly for single family housing and thirdly for recreational uses.

3. RESOURCE EXTRACTION

The town contains scattered gravel deposits and abundant forest lands. Logging is more prevalent than gravel mining and pulp wood is harvested for the areas paper mills and chip board plants.

F. PHYSICAL FEATURES

1. GEOLOGY

The land forms of Cotton Township are the result of glacial activity more than 10,000 years ago. The advancing and retreating melting glaciers gouged the land surface and deposited the parent soil materials over bedrock.

2. TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Cotton Township is gently rolling to flat, from east to west. Most of the upland is found in the eastern half and extensive wetland and bog areas are in the western half of the Town.

3. SOILS

The United States Department of Agriculture Soil Survey of St. Louis County is unpublished. However, Cotton soils are typical of the glacial till soils found in southern St. Louis County. The swamp and bog areas contain peat, muck and other hydric or wetland soils. There are scattered gravel deposits and several categories of loamy soils cover the upland areas.

4. DRAINAGE

The Whiteface River drains southeast Cotton and is fed by several minor tributaries from the unorganized territory east of Cotton Township. The southwest leg flows south to the main stem of the river located primarily in the northern half of the township. The river winds west and south toward its' confluence with the St. Louis River near Floodwood Minnesota.

5. WATER RESOURCES

Cotton Township has over a dozen small lakes and numerous creeks and streams. The inland lakes once dotted with seasonal cabins are now almost fully developed with year-round homes and seasonal cabins. The Whiteface River extends across the full length of Cotton with a well-defined channel and limited flood plain due to control structures up and downstream. The river presents additional opportunities for shoreland development and has been the topic of a special plan aimed at preserving the natural characteristics of the river and adjacent lands. The Whiteface/Cloquet River Plan established a special overlay zone for development in the Whiteface shoreland zone. The shoreland zone is extended up to 1,000 feet from the river in some areas to preserve existing natural features.

Cotton's water resources are supported by extensive wetland and bogs areas that help retain runoff and filter water flowing to and from local lakes and streams. There are certain areas along the Whiteface that are subject to flooding under extreme precipitation events. In 1999, the Cotton area was subject to a record year for summer precipitation and more than 10 inches of rainfall in less than a week resulted in flood damage losses for several properties in southwest Cotton.

G. COTTON COMMUNITY CENTER

1. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The land surrounding the intersection of State Trunk Highway 53 (STH) and St. Louis County Highway 52 (SLC Hwy 52), also known as the Comstock Lake Road/Arkola Road, is the *primary* commercial area in the community. This “Cotton Commercial” area is defined as; “the area one mile either side of the intersection of Comstock Lake Road/Arkola Road and State Trunk Highway 53”. A second area of commercial zoning is to the south of this area on the east side and is locally known as the Triple T Truck Stop site.

The east side is dominated by highway commercial development and the west side contains commercial uses, the Cotton Community Center and recreation area, and the Cotton School.

The intersection of the County 52 and STH 53 presents traffic conflicts during peak periods of the year primarily for traffic attempting to cross STH 53 from SLCH 52. The traffic on STH 53 during peak periods (such as the opening of fishing season, Fourth of July and deer season) will be heavy, traveling at high speeds, with few breaks for crossing traffic, or for vehicles attempting to merge with highway traffic. The problem can be further compounded when Cotton Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) emergency vehicles have to cross STH 53 during peak periods.

In response to this condition the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Duluth District has provided Cotton with two solar powered emergency flashers that can be activated by the CVFD and slow or stop traffic on STH 53 to allow emergency vehicles to cross safely.

Safe, efficient and easy access to and from the businesses in the Cotton commercial district requires strict adherence to traffic access management principles and proper design of access and egress to both STH 53 and SLCH 52. Access to commercial property should be from a frontage or “backage road” that can direct traffic to various commercial uses without additional “curb cuts” or driveways from either STH 53 or SLCH 52. The intersections of the frontage or backage roads should be set back from STH 53 a distance that provides for adequate stacking of crossing traffic and clear views of on-coming traffic.

The Cotton commercial district is dependant on individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) and wells for waste water treatment and potable water. The lack of a central sewage collection and treatment system is one barrier to more high volume commercial uses in the Towns’ commercial district. Innovations in small package systems and local sewage collection systems have not progressed to the point where cost effective service can be provided to existing developed properties or new development on vacant land. The commercial area can be expanded without a central sewage collection and treatment system, yet any opportunities to reduce the areas dependency on ISTS should be evaluated for cost and benefit to the commercial area.

The Cotton commercial district currently contains a 90 unit recreational vehicle campground with an indoor swimming pool and recreation area, that is currently closed. The campground could provide more economic benefits to the community and the commercial district if it could be promoted and operated at a profit.

Local residents believe the Cotton commercial district would be enhanced with the addition of a motel, a branch bank and grocery store.

2. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Industrial development in the community is fairly non-existent and some rural residential property not zoned for light industrial uses may contain home based businesses that undertake equipment repair, metal fabrication and light manufacturing. Cotton does not have an area zoned for industrial uses.

3. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Cotton Township is served by the St. Louis County Independent School District 2142 and operates the Cotton elementary and high school. The school is viewed as an important community asset. The Town is seeking ways to provide the School Board with input on options to upgrade the educational facilities and strengthen community participation and support.

4. RECREATION

Township residents have a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities that include fishing, hunting, hiking, snowmobiling, 4-wheeling, boating and similar activities. Organized recreation for youth revolves around the Cotton School and the recreation area adjacent to the Community Center building. Besides serving organized youth recreation the facility also serves as a neighborhood park for Cotton Township residents within one-half to one mile of the site.

Pedestrian traffic on the west side of STH 53 is subject to conflicts with vehicular traffic entering and exiting local businesses. The addition of a pedestrian path connecting the Cotton School with the Cotton Community Center recreation area would provide a safe connection between these facilities and encourage residents to use the path for exercise and recreation. If the path could be hard surfaced for use by roller blades, bikes and other non-motorized conveyances, it would provide another recreation/exercise facility for the community.

MAP OF COTTON AREA VICINITY

H. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS IN COTTON TOWNSHIP

The information resulting from the input received at the public meeting and from planning issue review and analysis discussions at monthly Task Force meetings, have evolved into statements defining desired future conditions for Cotton Township. The following statements describing desired future conditions are intended to provide another level of guidance for future decisions makers that will assist in evaluating the need and impact of residential, commercial and industrial development seeking to locate in Cotton.

LAKESHORE AND RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

1. FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Population projections for the Duluth area by the State Demographer and the Metropolitan Interstate Committee of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission indicate St. Louis County's population is declining and household size is decreasing. Most new construction throughout the county is in the shoreland areas.

Cotton's slow growth trend is expected to continue and new residents in Cotton will add about 20 new households to the community over the next 20 years. This growth will be sporadic and dependant on changing economic conditions, but on average, one new household per year can be expected in the community.

Based on current development trends the majority of new residential construction will seek shoreland development opportunities first and secondly to rural non-shoreland areas. New housing is located in areas appropriate for development in terms of land area, compatibility with adjacent development and environmental effects.

Multiple family and senior housing is a mix of small four to six unit structures adequately served by modern on-site water and wastewater disposal systems, if not convenient to public sewer and water systems.

2. PLANNING AND ZONING

Development in future Cotton Township is assisted by a local planning review board. The planning board reviews all conditional use and commercial development permits (excluding over-the-counter permits) proposed in Cotton Township and provides a detailed recommendation to the St. Louis County Planning Commission. The local review process permits the local review board to hold hearings in the community prior to county action.

Resource extraction activities are subject to local review before permitting by the county, and county review attaches permit conditions that are responsive to local concerns.

Enforcement of St. Louis County conditional use permits is assisted by a local Planning Review Board. The Planning Review Board consists of representatives from all segments of the community including, shoreland residential, non-shoreland rural residential, industrial, commercial and environmental interests.

3. SHORELAND DEVELOPMENT

New development in the river, stream and lakeshore areas of the community complies with all applicable state and county regulations governing development in shoreland zones. Water quality is managed at the watershed level and development in lake basins and stream valleys does not present a threat to water quality from wastewater treatment systems and other land uses that contribute nutrients, sediments or other pollutants to the Town's water resources.

Zoning districts reflect lake basin management concerns and population and dwelling unit densities decrease in the areas away from the shores of the Town's rivers, lakes and streams.

Advances in wastewater treatment technology and regulations support reduced impacts from on-site individual sewage treatment systems. Problem areas are identified and property owners and residents work with public officials to resolve existing problems with solutions that are comprehensive, long lasting and affordable.

I. RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. RURAL NON-LAKESHORE DEVELOPMENT

Rural non-shoreland residential development in future Cotton Township complies with all applicable state and county requirements. Home based businesses in the rural areas are suited to their property and do not present blighting impacts on adjacent properties. Equipment and products from home based businesses are not stored in the open or visible from public roads or adjacent properties. Properties that involve automotive and equipment repair are not cluttered with parts and hulks that are visible from public roads or nearby properties.

Livestock operations are properly sited and comply with all applicable state and county regulations.

2. RESOURCE EXTRACTION ACTIVITIES.

Aggregate mining and timber harvesting in Cotton Township comply with all applicable state and county regulations.

Reclamation of depleted aggregate mines in Cotton Township have added open space, recreation and residential development.

3. REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER COTTON DUMP

Redevelopment of this property fronting on the Whiteface River is dependant on the removal of decomposed waste materials and an absence of hazardous compounds. Once the decomposed wastes were removed, the excavated area was filled and graded to provide useable area to support future senior or townhome development.

The cost of regrading the site and the remaining undisturbed area available for use as building sites and wastewater treatment systems could preclude its use for housing development. If these preferred uses are not economically or technically feasible the property will be considered for a variety of recreational uses serving residents and visitors. Recreational uses provide an economic development function that support existing businesses in Cotton

J. COTTON COMMUNITY CENTER

1. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

The intersection of Trunk Highway 53 and County Highway 52 is Cotton Township's core commercial area for the future, and the intersection of Comstock Lake Road/Arkola Road and State Trunk Highway 53 is a safe, attractive commercial area that serves local residents and highway travelers. The mix of commercial uses on the east side of the highway are well lighted but illumination does not spill over onto adjacent properties or present glare to highway traffic. Signage is attractive and does not present a visually cluttered appearance to the area.

Commercial development is served by acceleration and deceleration lanes on the highway and there are no obstructions to traffic visibility for shoppers and travelers. Traffic flows safely on and off the highway and across on Comstock Lake Road/Arkola Road.

New commercial developments are served by frontage or backage road access and intersections of local roads with state and county roads do not result in dangerous or limited capacity intersections. There is adequate site distance for crossing traffic and stacking space for peak traffic periods.

New commercial development includes lodging for highway travelers, vacationers and recreational vehicles. The added population and pedestrian traffic is beneficial to the business

corridor and provides incentive for additional local residential development because of the services that are available at the local level.

All new commercial development (excluding over-the-counter permits) is subject to SLC Planning Dept. Permits and there is planning review at the Township level to provide the County Planning Commission with recommendations for conditioning the development consistent with local concerns.

The addition of lodging for highway travelers and vacationers in the commercial district has added seasonal population, enhances local businesses and provides education and employment opportunities for Cotton youth.

2. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

Industrial development in future Cotton Township conforms to all applicable state and county regulations and presents employment opportunities for community residents. Industrial uses are located in areas with appropriate zoning and do not present blighting impacts on adjacent properties. New industrial development has been located next to or in close proximity to existing permitted industrial uses and zones.

All industrial development in Cotton Township is served by adequate on-site utilities or connected to public systems. Uses that generate objectionable side effects such as noise, dust, odors, vibration and glare are not allowed, nor are industrial uses that generate large quantities of hazardous materials or wastes.

3. PUBLIC EDUCATION

The community is actively involved in the local school and the local school district has committed to quality education for the community. In a cooperative effort the community and the St. Louis County Independent School District 2142, have prepared a plan for future school facilities consistent with local needs and population pressures.

4. RECREATION

Residents of future Cotton Township enjoy a variety of winter and summer recreation activities on private and public lands, and waters. Residents have access to motorized and non-motorized trails. Organized youth recreation programs are centered in Cotton with local school and township facilities.

The Town cooperates with user groups to develop and maintain needed facilities. Certain athletic fields have been developed in conjunction with the local school district and maintained by it.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAP

HIGHWAY ACCESS MAP

PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Responsibility for implementation of the Cotton Township Comprehensive Plan will fall primarily on the Town Board. St. Louis County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will also have responsibility for access control issues on TH 53 and redevelopment of the Cotton dump site.

The St. Louis County Independent School District 2142 and the private sector are other players in developing future Cotton.

A. Redevelopment of the Cotton Dump Site.

This project was dependant on a finding that no hazardous materials or compounds are present in the old fill and the MPCA to follow through to fund a project to remove the old fill for capping the former St. Louis County Landfill.

Phase I and Phase II Studies conducted by the MPCA concluded there are no significant concentrations of hazardous materials in the old dump site. Given the Town's limited resources the next course of action is to obtain Department of Trade and Economic Development funds to complete testing and certify the site is ready for redevelopment once the old fill materials are removed.

The township must rely on the MPCA to fund the removal project and complete capping of the old landfill. Once the material is removed from the site the Town will have to determine how to regrade and fill the property so it can be used for future senior housing, small scale multiple family housing or single family housing. The Town should look to the private sector to accomplish this work and may consider selling the land to a developer that has the financial means to redevelop the property. The selling price would determine what options a developer would have to regrade the excavated area and develop a quality housing development on the site.

B. Development of the Community Center

The center of the community is the intersection of TH 53 and SLCH 52 containing the Cotton School, the Cotton Community Center building and recreation area, and several businesses. There are a number of actions that will be development driven and there are others where the Town Board could take a leadership role and work to accomplish specific projects that will enhance the area and the community.

Development of a frontage or backage road access system for new commercial uses will be development driven and close cooperation with MNDOT will be necessary to achieve the highway access objectives of the plan.

Construction of a pedestrian trail connecting the Community Center and the School could be a Community Development Block Grant project through St. Louis County Community Development program.

Another project that would enhance the vitality of the commercial area is the reopening of the ICO campground or reuse of the site for other purposes that would bring additional population to the area. The plan examined a proposal that would see the public cooperate to use the facility to train and educate students in a real world setting. School District 2142 officials did not believe they had the resources to carry this through. Nevertheless, this unused or under used facility should be viewed as an opportunity for continued development of the community center.

C. Rezoning of the Highway Commercial District.

The planning process identified a desire to have the land three quarters of a mile north and one mile south on the east side of the highway from the intersection of TH 53 and SLCH 52, and one half mile north and three quarters of a mile south on the west side of the highway from this intersection rezoned to commercial. All of the affected property should be rezoned immediately upon adoption of the plan including the 27.69 acre parcel south of the TH 53 and Grey Road intersection.

New commercial uses would be subject to local review of the proposed development to ensure compliance with the plan and highway access management considerations. The Town Board would be responsible for carrying out this action by adopting a resolution creating a local planning review board.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR OLD DUMP SITE

2. POPULATION STUDY

3. ZONING ANALYSIS

EFFECTUATION

This amendment to Ordinance No. 27, Article II, Section 25 - Cotton Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan, shall take effect and be in full force on the ____ day of _____, upon its adoption by the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners and its publication in the official newspaper(s) of St. Louis County as provided by Minnesota Statutes.

A public hearing was held by the St. Louis County Planning Commission on February 15, 2001, and by the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners on April 10, 2001. Recommended by the Planning Commission to the County Board for adoption on the 15th day of February, 2001.

Commissioner _____ moved the adoption of this ordinance amendment, Commissioner _____ duly seconded the motion, and the ordinance amendment was adopted on the following vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Absent:

Chairman, County Board

Certified as a complete and accurate copy of Ordinance No. 27, Article II, Section 25 - Solway Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Gordon McFaul, County Auditor

ATTEST:

Paul Tynjala
Clerk of the County Board

